DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 131 648 EC 091 915

TITLE	Gifted Children in the Schools. Part 1 of 5.
INSTITUTION	George Washington Univ., Washington, D.C. Inst. for Educational Leadership.; National Public Radio, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY	Carnegie Corp. of New York, N.Y.; Ford Foundation, New York, N.Y.; National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.; Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, Inc., New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE	76
NOTE	22p.; A transcript of National Public Radio's OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, Program No. 27; For related documents in the series, see EC 091 915 - EC 091 919
AVAILABLE FROM	National Public Radio, 2025 M Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Attitudes; Creativity; *Delivery Systems; Early Childhood Education; *Educational Radio; Elementary Secondary Education; Exceptional Child Education; *Gifted; Post Secondary Education; Radio; *Responsibility; Special Classes; *Special Programs; *Talented Students; Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS	Options in Education

ABSTRACT

Provided is the transcript of Part I of a five-part series on gifted children in the schools, presented by Options in Education--a weekly radio broadcast devoted to coverage of news, features, policy, and people in the field of education on National Public Radio. The topic of special education for the gifted is discussed by B. Boston; and pros and cons of the issue are described by such artists, educators, and specialists as L. Nevelson, H. Lyon Jr., D. Moynihan, J. Curry, M. Kahn, and R. Pohl. Children from a special classroom for gifted and talented students in Kansas City, Missouri, are interviewed. (IM)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

PROGRAM #27

TRANSCRIPT FOR

"Gifted Children in the Schools."

Part 1 of 5.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

National Public Radio

Options in Education

2025 M Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20036
202-785-6462

ED131648

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
J. Merrow
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1-2
SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR THE GIFTED: ELITIST?	
Dr. Bruce Boston, Project Coordinator, ERIC Clearinghouse for Handicapped & Gifted Children, Reston, Virginia	2-4
PRO/CON	
LOUISE NEVELSON, Sculptor	6
DR. HAROLD LYON, JR., Office of Gifted & Talented, U.S. Office of Education, DAN BITAN, Head of Gifted Programs in Israel	6-9
DR. DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN	9-10
DR. JAMES CURRY, Consultant for Gifted Education, Cedar Falls, Iowa	11-12
MICHAEL KAHN, Director, American Shakespeare Theater, Stratford, Connecticut	13-15
DR. RUDY POHL, Editor of "Gifted and Talented Education"	16-17
CHILDREN FROM SPECIAL CLASSROOM FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED IN KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI	17-18

This special series of programs is made possible by a grant from the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation.

EC091915

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
John Merrow
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

"Copyright © 1976 by National Public Radio & The Institute for Educational Leadership."

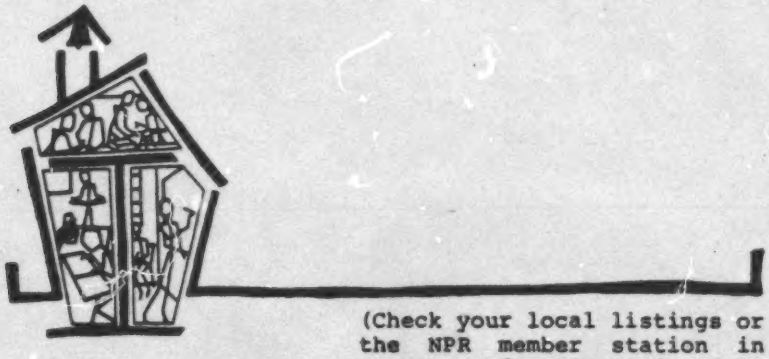
OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is an electronic weekly magazine devoted to coverage of news, features, policy & people in the field of education. The program is available for broadcast to the 181 member stations of National Public Radio.

The Executive Producer is John Merrow. The Producer is Midge Hart. The Associate Producer is Jo Ellyn Rackleff, and the Co-Host is Wendy Blair.

Permission is hereby granted for the non-profit reproduction of any and all of the copyrighted material contained in this transcript providing credit is given to National Public Radio's OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a co-production of National Public Radio and the Institute for Educational Leadership of the George Washington University.

Principal support is provided by a grant from the National Institute of Education. Additional funds are provided by the Carnegie Corporation, the Ford Foundation, the U. S. Office of Education, the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.



(Check your local listings or the NPR member station in your area for time and date of broadcast.)

Contact: Ms. S. Gay Kinney
Public Information
(202) 785-6462

THE GIFTED & TALENTED

(OPENING MUSICAL THEME)

BLAIR: I'm Wendy Blair with NPR's OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a news magazine about all the issues in education - from the ABC's of pre-school to the alphabet soup of government programs. If you've ever been to school, we have something that will interest you.

MERROW: This is John Merrow. This week we begin a five-part series about gifted children in the schools.

CHILD: Sometimes I'm faster than other people because that's what I like to do best - playing sports - so I can run and stuff and get exercise.

I'm different from other people because I study stars and everything - but I don't know that much about 'em. I'm just learning.

CHILD: Well, sometimes, I'm good at some things, and other times I'm not. But sometimes I'm a pretty nice kid, and sometimes I'm pretty mean and weird, and goof around, silly sort of.

CHILD: I always draw trucks and talk about 'em. If I hear a truck, or a fire truck or a police car, or something, I run to a window because I love to see 'em. And I like to do math and all that.

CHILD: I'm a nice girl, I think. I'm small, active and usually called "Professor" by my fellow classmates because I wear glasses and I'm known in classes to be intelligent.

BLAIR: Those children study in a special classroom for gifted and talented in Kansas City, Missouri. The United States has 45 million school age children, and of that number perhaps 2 million are so superior in intellect or talent that they may require special educational opportunities for their potential to develop fully. But the whole notion of special treatment for the gifted is controversial.

DR. BRUNO BETTLEHEIM: I feel that the gifted child, despite the concern of many parents, is well able to take care of himself. If he isn't, then he isn't gifted. But I think that the deprived child or the child with handicaps is a child who is entitled to special help. The gifted are saying, "We'll do it. We'll make it all by ourselves."

MERROW: Dr. Bruno Bettleheim, a leading child psychologist who works with emotionally disturbed children. Bettleheim sums up a popular notion about gifted children: Cream rises to the top. Perhaps this cliche is one of the reasons that state and Federal funding for the gifted lags far behind the money available for educating the retarded, the disadvantaged and the handicapped.

New developments in law indicate that handicapped children have a right to special education. Last year, the Congress passed "The Education of All Handicapped Children Act", stating that the states must provide a free and appropriate education for those children, and the Federal government will eventually provide states with up to 40% of the excess costs of that "appropriate" education. Officials estimate that this may mean up to $1 billion Federal dollars.

BLAIR: The key word there is "appropriate" - because advocates of special programs for the gifted say that appropriate education for an especially bright youngster is also expensive and that gifted children have their rights, too.

This year, for the first time since 1958, the Federal government is spending money on the gifted -- $2 1/2 million, which amounts to a little more than $1 per child. One study indicates that we, as a nation, spend 43 times as much on the underprivileged and 28 times as much on the handicapped.

MERROW: But maybe that's as it should be. Americans are a generous people, ready to help those in need. But are gifted children really needy? Wouldn't they - or most of them, anyway - make it on their own? And isn't it somehow undemocratic to spend extra money on those who are born with special gifts and talents?

But even if the public could be persuaded to spend extra money on educational programs for the gifted, there are other unanswered questions -- and there are obstacles. What should those programs be like? Should the gifted be sent to special schools, or kept in the regular classroom? Who is gifted, and what tests should schools use to find out?

BLAIR: And, you may feel that you "just know" when children are gifted because they wear thick glasses, or they ask a lot of questions, and the Federal definition isn't much more help than the stereotypes. "Gifted children," the definition says, "possess outstanding abilities and are capable of major performance." That's obviously ambiguous. So, most states and schools also use I.Q. and other tests of intelligence to identify the gifted. The usual cut-off point is an I.Q. score of 130.

MERROW: But intelligence is only one kind of gift. Creativity is another and so is physical coordination. Lots of gifts don't show up on I.Q. tests. Moreover, testing is expensive, and what do you do with gifted students once you find out who they are? The old answer of "skipping" children a grade or two or six may cause social maladjustment for the gifted child, and separate schools or separate programs within schools may be too expensive. And how should teachers react to students who are smarter and quicker than the rest of the class - and, perhaps, ahead of the teacher as well?

BLAIR: Some teachers of the gifted say that these children are a precious natural resource, and that we, as a nation, can't afford not to educate them properly. At a recent meeting of The Council for Exceptional Children, John talked about some of these points with Dr. Bruce Boston, Project Coordinator of the ERIC Clearinghouse for Handicapped & Gifted Children in Reston, Virginia.

BOSTON: We have in American society a very curious sort of phenomenon. On the one hand we say that every child should be educated to the extent of that child's ability to learn. On the other hand, we don't like the notion of "elitism" in American society. In programming for gifted kids, they often in the public mind amount to a form of elitism.

MERROW: You say, "It amounts to." It is.

BOSTON: No, it's not.

MERROW: Why isn't it?

BOSTON: If American society is going to develop the human resources that it has, then those resources have to be singled out. They have to be identified, and they have to be enhanced. It is no more elitist to identify and provide special programming for a gifted child than it

is to identify and provide special programs for a handicapped child, or for a Black child, or for a Spanish-speaking child, or for a woman.

MERROW: Do you really believe that?

BOSTON: I do. What can I tell you? It's simply that people do fall into certain kinds of groupings.

MERROW: It seems to me that you're afraid to bite the bullet. You're afraid to say that this is an elitist notion; that there are children in this country who are superior, intellectually and academically, creatively, and that they should be treated preferentially, and you're kind of evading that. You're trying to say, "Well, it's the same thing that we do with the handicapped child." I find that really hard to accept.

BOSTON: From my point of view, these kids are entitled to an education which is commensurate with their ability to benefit from it. In that sense, it is an elitist notion. But what I want to stress is that -- To make special educational provisions for this group of children, on the basis of their ability, with a potential to benefit from it, is not a bad thing. Elitism, in that sense, is not a bad thing. It's a good thing - because this kind of education provides benefit above and beyond what it costs to make it happen.

The problem is that we don't really know how to measure the social benefit that comes from developing a brilliant chemist. Moreover, we have absolutely no way of measuring the benefit to society that's lost for not providing the special programming and the special educational events and experiences. A lot of people don't think of it this way, but we have actually in American society and in American education been in the business of "Gifted Child Education" for a long time, a very long time. The point of the story is that we have been doing this with one particular area of giftedness -- high school athletes. We hire coaches. We give them fields, shoulder pads, release time, buses. But these are children who are gifted in one particular area - the use of their body, and we spend millions of dollars in American high schools, in junior high schools, every year to promote these kinds of programs, but we're not willing to spend the same time to program for a creative child - for a child who is cognitively gifted in mathematics, say - or for a kid who has an I.Q. of 150 - or for a child who is talented and gifted in the performing arts, or as a musician. We're not willing to spend nearly the amount of money, or the time, or to find the staff, to develop the abilities of children in these areas -- to see to it that some of the resources of the school system went into finding and developing somebody who someday may discover the cheapest way to convert solar energy to heat houses!

MERROW: But, in fact, my point is that the people who resent the money that's being spent on the "jocks" would resent just as strongly perhaps taking some of that money and spending it on training academically or creatively gifted children.

BOSTON: Well, they might. The line is -- the father who says, "Why should my tax dollar go to provide a special education for a kid who has an I.Q. of 150, when my kid is only getting "C" grades? You know - I'm much more interested in finding a way that my tax money can be spent to raise my child's grade from a "C" to a "B" than I am to provide a new chemistry laboratory so some gifted kid can play with test tubes.

MERROW: And your answer?

BOSTON: My answer is -- I understand that you feel that way. I don't know what the answer to that is. There are "X" number of dollars, and the allocation for resources for education is a "Zero Sum" game. If you take some from here to put over here, you've only got so much to deal with, and there's no way that you can cover the whole waterfront.

I'm an advocate for gifted child education. I believe that these kids have gotten the short end of the stick for too long, and until, and unless, we are willing to commit ourselves to the development of this segment of our population, there is an enormous wastage of human resource in this country and in the world in general.

MERROW: Let me be that father for a second? Okay, big deal! I don't find your answer persuasive. Those kids will succeed anyway. Cream rises to the top!

BOSTON: Cream does not rise to the top! This is one of the prevailing myths of gifted child education. It's very interesting that among a group of high school drop-outs who were studied by a research team in the Midwest, it was discovered that gifted children drop out of school at a rate anywhere from three to five times greater than their distribution in the normal population.

Now, I don't know what happens to them. I don't know whether they go back to school or what. But if we are losing gifted children at a greater rate from high schools than they are found in the normal population, then we are losing a lot -- not just in terms of these individual human beings, but in terms of the potential they have to make a contribution to society.

You know, it may well be the long-term investment that we make in the gifted child is the one who is gonna be the John Dewey of tomorrow who's going to find the resources or the ways of teaching - whatever it is - that's going to help raise your child's grade in chemistry from a "C" to a "B". Now, that doesn't help you, and it doesn't help your kid today or tomorrow, but at some point it's going to help somebody. And education is an investment that we make in our society.

MERROW: But I want to help my kid today, and we're making the investment today. And, therefore, me and my group are voting to spend the money the way we're spending it now - and not on your kid.

BOSTON: Fine. That's who you are, and that's what you want, and I am willing to compete with you and your group for the educational dollar. My experience is that in the long run you will probably win. But that's not going to keep me from continuing to enter into the struggle for a better education for gifted children.

BLAIR: Dr. Bruce Boston at The Council for Exceptional Children meeting in Chicago. At present, only one third of those who are identified as gifted are in special programs. Beyond that some educators estimate that only one gifted person in twenty will ever be identified.

("IF I HAD WINGS . . ." by Peter, Paul & Mary)

MERROW: I visited Connecticut's Talcott Mountain Science Center for Gifted Children last month and talked to one young student about her dreams and her education.

AN "EXPLORER" WHO HATES SPELLING

CHILD: I'm going to be turning eleven pretty soon.

MERROW: When?

CHILD: A couple of months.

MERROW: When's your birthday?

CHILD: June 19th.

MERROW: Mine's June 14th.

CHILD: Five days off . . . we're both Gemini.

MERROW: I know you're studying geology right now, but you want to be an explorer. How come?

CHILD: Exploring is a little bit of everything, and you go hiking all the time. And you do geology, and all the other things, and you stay outside mostly.

MERROW: You like to stay outside mostly.

CHILD: Yeah - it's better than inside.

MERROW: You must not like school all that much?

CHILD: Ah - it's okay.

MERROW: What do you like best about school?

CHILD: Gym and recess . . . and I like math.

MERROW: What are the things you don't like about school?

CHILD: I don't like spelling because, you know, you just sit there and listen to words and write them down. You don't do much.

MERROW: Are you a good speller?

CHILD: Yeah.

MERROW: How do you spell "maintenance"?

CHILD: M-A-I-N-T-E-N-A-N-C-E?

MERROW: That's right. How do you spell "pneumonia"?

CHILD: That one I don't know. (laughter) P-H . . .

MERROW: No, that's a P-N . . .

CHILD: P-N-E-U . . . I don't know. . . M-O-N-I-A.

MERROW: Right. That's right. You're a good speller. You just don't like to . . .

CHILD: It's boring! Because you just sit there.

MERROW: What do you do? Do you just sit there or daydream or what?

CHILD: Well, most of the time I go ahead of the teacher.

MERROW: Maybe what you should do is sneak a book you want to read in there and hide it inside the spelling book, and read.

CHILD: I hide it inside my desk and read. (laughter)

(More of "IF I HAD WINGS . . ." by Peter, Paul & Mary)

MERROW: Whether or not that young girl will reach her potential remains to be seen, but her prospects look bright to me.

LOUISE NEVELSON, SCULPTOR

LOUISE NEVELSON: You see, I feel that we humans have within us the measurements of our potential. It's a tragedy if you don't use it all.

MERROW: Louise Nevelson, one of America's most famous sculptors, exemplifies the full use of potential. Now in her 70's, she enjoys a worldwide reputation as an exciting and innovative artist. She talked about her gift with Reporter Miriam Goodman in San Francisco.

NEVELSON: I wanted it for myself. Do you know I've never made a piece for anybody? I make it because it reveals something of the world of consciousness to me. And even by themselves over many, many years it only made me work more. Because I really was doing this to find myself - at the height of myself - not at the depth of myself. That's easy. To slide down is very easy.

Having been born in Russia, brought up in Maine, I feel that probably I inherited in the genes a kind of universal thing.

GOODMAN: If you had your life to live over again as an artist and as a woman, what might you have done differently?

NEVELSON: Oh, probably have done the whole thing differently, but I feel that if you know that you're born with what I was born I don't think it could have been stopped. And a lot of people take the position and say . . ."That was easy for me!" For me it was goddamned hard!

(More of "IF I HAD WINGS . . ." by Peter, Paul & Mary)

DR. HAROLD LYON, JR.

DR. HAROLD LYON, JR.: These are the youngsters who will march to their own drum-beats, and often there is a lot of hostility directed toward them. They ask the threatening questions in the classroom.

BLAIR: That is Dr. Harold Lyon, Jr., of the Office of Gifted & Talented at the U.S. Office of Education. Lyon and other advocates are concerned that unidentified gifted children are often misunderstood by their teachers, and so their talents are wasted. This concern is not limited to the United States. Last year, a World Council for the Gifted was established in London. Its Director is Dan Bitan, Head of Gifted Programs in Israel. John spoke with Bitan & Harold Lyon at a recent planning session of the World Council. First, Dr. Lyon.

LYON: One of the things that characterizes our new national effort here in the USA is an effort to broaden the definition of giftedness, to consider not only those youngsters with high IQ's, but also those with leadership ability, artistic talent, and creativity. And we share this common concern which brings us together in this world council in an effort to try to cooperate across state lines.

MERROW: I'm sure people listening to this would be interested in knowing how different countries around the world care for gifted children. You work for the state -- does the state invest heavily in gifted and talented?

DAN BITAN: I wouldn't say the State of Israel invests heavily, but it is one of the few states in the world now, as far as we know, where the government decided to have a special department for gifted children. It means that the Ministry for Education in Israel sees as its responsibility to deal with gifted children, as it has the responsibility to deal, for instance, with disadvantaged children.

MERROW: Dr. Lyon, to what extent do other countries treat gifted kids as a priceless natural resource, if you will?

LYON: For example, in Russia they have what they call pioneer palaces where these youngsters are groomed for specific jobs in specific needed areas to be filled. The youngsters have very little choice about what area they must go into. That's my objection to their system, but the fact that they are paying attention to their country's most valuable resource is impressive.

MERROW: What about the countries besides Russia?

LYON: I was interested to find that as poorly as we seem to be doing in this country that the situation is bleak and even bleaker in the other countries that I spoke with.

MERROW: Is that your perception also?

BITAN: I think yes. I think that there is a misconception about gifted children which is still general in almost all countries that gifted children can get away or can achieve by themselves. They don't need any special help. This is characteristic of most western European countries, like Denmark, Sweden and Norway.

There is a confusion about the concept of democracy. People think that if their country is democratic that means that they don't have to have special provisions for these kind of children, while I consider democracy as giving equal opportunity to different people to be different and to learn according to their potential and pace, etc.

MERROW: To each according to his need?

BITAN: Oh yes. Yes, I think that even the socialist countries should take more seriously their slogans. That means, to give to each according to his needs and, then, get from each according to his potential or capacity.

MERROW: Why is it that in so many western countries the society seems to be willing to spend much more on the needs of people

who are on the lower end of the scale, if you will -- the disadvantaged kids. but not on kids who are gifted?

BITAN: Well, I think that they are right in spending as much money as they have on the disadvantaged, but they should understand that in education you must work simultaneously. You must have special education for the retarded, for instance. And you must have special education for the gifted.

Now, many democratic countries don't understand, don't see this point. They think that equality means being the same.

MERROW: It's a common criticism that institutions tend to work toward the norm, to push everybody toward the middle. That's certainly a common criticism of schools in this country. Is that true of schools in Israel?

BITAN: To some extent, yes. I think there is also a psychological phenomena of a little jealousy towards a gifted person and gifted children. So, the people don't like to deal with them. They feel better when they deal with the weak. They feel they are strong, then.

LYON: And when you talk about the disadvantaged, there are many gifted among the ranks of the disadvantaged. And this is one reason that Congress saw fit to pass the legislation which we now have for the first time in this country for the gifted and talented.

They're concerned, not just about the upper middleclass youngsters, but those from the ghettos, barrios, those from lower income families, are often gifted. And even those who are achieving below grade level sometimes are gifted youngsters who are so turned off by the lockstep system that they are using their gift in other ways than in the classroom.

BITAN: Let me give you an example from Israel. We have a major effort now called Welfare Program within the Ministry for Education, and this is directed towards disadvantaged population, student population. And part of the money -- not the largest part -- but part of the money will go to identify the gifted among them, and my department will work and is working already, in cooperation with those in charge of this Welfare Program, so that we can get the best of both departments and of the money allocated towards these kinds of programs.

MERROW: What percent of education budget of Israel is spent on gifted people?

BITAN: I think that now it is much less than one percent, approximately a half a percent, which is not much, but which is much more than most of the countries in the world.

MERROW: Dr. Lyon, what percent of the federal contribution to education goes for training gifted kids?

LYON: Even less in this country. With the new legislation we have to serve the entire country two and a half million dollars, and we're trying to use it in a way that has high leverage, high multiplying effect. We can't begin to reach the 17,000 school districts of the country directly. But we can influence the fifty states,

and that's where the leverage is. There's a very high correlation between a fulltime effort at the State Department level and excellence within states. And we're trying to build upon that. We've been training teams from 48 of the 50 states so far. Those teams are doing it now on their own, getting a lot of things to happen, passing legislation, and hiring fulltime people.

MERROW: Thanks very much. Dan Bitan who directs programs for the gifted in Israel and Dr. Hal Lyon, Director of the U.S. Office of Education effort.

BLAIR: A recurring theme among advocates of special attention for the gifted is that these children may some day solve major world problems, but what about those who are working on those problems right now? How do prominent adults feel about their own childhood, about the special treatment they may or may not have received?

(MUSIC)

John spoke with Dr. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, teacher, writer, and former Ambassador to India and the United Nations.

DR. DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN

DR. DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN: I always found, contrary to what I was told, to whit— that the world was a very hard place and a very cruel place, and that, in fact, it was nothing of the kind -- that in the main, it welcomed any sign of achievement or the desire for achievement, that it was encouraged, not discouraged. And I'm talking about a pretty chancy life. I'm talking about what it's like to shine shoes on New York City streets when you're twelve years old. The world was not full of people kicking me in the ass and telling me to move on.

MERROW: You are a very gifted person. You're an excellent writer and a leader. People look to you. Was there a time in your life when you had some sense that you did have a talent that sets you apart from other people?

MOYNIHAN: Well, not supposing that I do have such a talent, this is not anything I ever perceived. I had no sense ever of being anything different, say, in the feint perception that I could write better than some, and that I was interested in things different from most. Italways seemed as kind of deviant, but I was never terribly impressed by this.

MERROW: But you're painting a picture of yourself as something of an outsider.

MOYNIHAN: Oh yes, I've always been that. And that I've known.

MERROW: Do you have a sense that anybody singled you out, that people said, "Let's keep an eye on Moynihan -- let's sort of help Moynihan and make sure that he goes to college."

MOYNIHAN: No, I left high school in 1943 and went to work on the docks. Then a friend who was in high school came around to see me one day in August over on Pier 48 and said that CCNY was giving examinations that night. Would I want to come up with him? And I just went up with him for the companionship for the evening, and

so I went to CCNY that fall and joined the Navy next spring, but being in CCNY I joined the Navy under the officers training program, and so I went to college. No one looked after me, but life did. I was lucky. If my friend had not come around, I would have been drafted 18 months later and be a boilermaker today.

MERROW: So, you're saying that a big part of the rise you're ascribing to luck?

MOYNIHAN: Most of it.

MERROW: To move it away from Daniel Patrick Moynihan to a general question of how we, as a nation, treat gifted children -- do the policies we follow, insofar as there are policies, make sense to you?

MOYNIHAN: Well, it makes sense to me that there not be policies, yes. Gifted children are something that in the first instance families should perceive and everybody else should keep quiet about. If they're gifted, it's because they have capacities to go their own way, and the strongest thing is to go your own way.

The most you can do for the gifted children is to leave them be, but expect them to perform, kind of create a situation in which -- but this I think is a family affair -- in which some kind of achievement is seen associated with the rewards of love. And if you can't have love, prestige.

MERROW: You're arguing for the status quo -- that gifted children will make it.

MOYNIHAN: When you argue for the status quo in the United States, you are presumed to be in some way deficient in your understanding of the horrors of our post-industrial society. But, in fact, I can only with respect to this subject tell you what happened to me, in which I grew up in pretty chancy circumstances. And people were very pleased to see me do reasonably well.

I revert to my judgment that this is a country that likes to see kids do well and encourages them. And it's possible to know that there's something probably in any person that only that person can do and to tease it out, and hope for it, and encourage it, is a good thing. But in the main, sir, I commend your attention to this issue, but don't pay too much attention to it.

MERROW: You wouldn't have the Soviet system, identifying gifted children at a very early age and diverting them into fields where the government judges they'll need talent in the years ahead?

MOYNIHAN: It's called totalitarianism, and the one thing you may be sure of is that they get very little talent out of that. They get competence, but very little more.

MERROW: Thanks very much. Dr. Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

(MUSIC)

BLAIR: Moynihan subscribes to the Horatio Alger idea that with luck and pluck anyone can get ahead, especially the gifted. That view is obviously not shared by proponents of special programs for

the gifted. Many educators say that American schools don't reward excellence, that they aim everything at the average child. This argument has its roots in our politics -- the old debate between Jacksonian democracy (with its emphasis on the greatest good for the greatest number) and the Jeffersonian ideal of meeting the unique needs of each individual. A 1971 Office of Education report says "gifted and talented children in average schools are, in fact, deprived and can suffer psychological damage and permanent impairment of their ability to function well."

DR. JAMES CURRY

DR. JAMES CURRY: We were driving by some tulip beds and there was a gardener out there cutting off some of the tulips, and we were wondering why he was doing that. And they said they liked all the tulips to come up at one time, and that kind of reminded me the way we are in education -- we want everyone to be at the mean; you know, we have this terrible feeling, like everyone has to be the same on their basic skills test. And we don't want too many flowers coming up early and too many coming up late.

BLAIR: Dr. James Curry, a consultant for gifted children in Cedar Falls, Iowa, does not believe that special classes for the gifted run counter to the egalitarian idea of democracy. He tells John that it depends on how you look at it.

CURRY: Are we all competing or are we all cooperating? Some people see, you know, that we're in the race of life, and here you have gifted kids that have better track shoes and 200 yards headstart and you want to give them another 500 yards. And they're saying that there's this great race of life in which we all have to compete.

I'd rather look at it in terms of saying that if we can cooperate, if we can allow those who have special ability, special talents, to use them, that it will benefit all of us. It's not elitist. I'm reminded of the fact the dinosaurs made it a hundred million years and man is supposed to have been around about two and a half.

And if you believe all the horror stories that the ecologists tell us and Jacque Cousteau when he's in the Calypso sailing across the ocean, then you'd believe that maybe it would be a good idea to take those that can really make a difference and allow them to do so for our own good.

MERROW: What about the notion that if we set up programs for gifted kids that somehow we're going to create this elite which will intermarry and produce a kind of ruling class of elite people, who will be quite distant from the rest of us? Is that an absurd kind of thing to even ask?

CURRY: I'm not sure that our ruling class isn't distant from us now, but maybe that's a good argument. Sandy Kaplan, who's the assistant director of the Leadership Training Institute, has an excellent presentation on how to help gifted children to see that gifts are not something to flaunt. They're something to use. I'm reminded of the Biblical situation in which the Hebrews were told they were chosen, and that meant chosen to serve and not chosen to abuse. And I feel the same way about gifts.

MERROW: That's a fascinating notion about gifted, that somehow to be gifted carries with it a responsibility within yourself, and it's a thing inside you, in effect, that you must develop or else you are, in fact, being irresponsible.

CURRY: I heard an interesting story. Someone said being gifted is like having a Christmas gift -- it's no good unless you open it and use it. And I think that's a fair analogy.

MERROW: It conjures up for me "The Red Shoes." Do you know that wonderful movie, "The Red Shoes?"

CURRY: No.

MERROW: Essentially, the idea is that she must dance -- she must dance to live, and I wonder if that idea of giftedness is accurate, that if you have this, that not to nurture it is destructive?

CURRY: I think that it's human to want to use one's potential. A gift -- a Christmas gift -- is undeserved and, yet, it is no good unless it's opened.

MERROW: Jim Curry, who's Area-of Education Consultant for the Gifted in Iowa.

(MUSIC)

HIGH SCHOOL PRODIGIES AT SCIENCE FAIR IN BOSTON

BOY: No matter how you act a lot of people will still think that you're something special, but if you try to just be yourself, I guess people generally will be attracted to you and won't think you're some kind of freak that grew up.

GIRL: They sort of look at you with a strange feeling that, like, why would you go all through that work? You know, does it give you that much of self-satisfaction? Because I went to a science convention last year -- I missed my junior prom -- and they kind of don't realize that you have to look beyond today, that there's always a tomorrow.

GIRL: In my high school, it seems that the students that are there are not even really there to learn. The teachers don't push it. The students don't let them push it.

BOY: You know there's a difference, but you have to be humble about it, because any other way it just causes terrible reactions from everybody.

BOY: I don't have as many troubles as the popular stereotype might lead people to believe. The old business about the withdrawn intellectual with myopic bulging brain -- this is not true. I have the very strong feeling that my friends -- we actually live life more intensely. We get involved more. And that's why we're here. Because we got involved, and we got committed to something. And we had an idea, and we were interested enough in it to chase it to a conclusion.

(MUSIC)

BLAIR: Those were high school prodigies at a recent science fair in Boston sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Giftedness covers the entire range of human experience -- from the exact sciences to the performing arts. Reporter Connie Goldman talked to the director of one of the nation's most prestigious reperatory theaters, The American Shakespeare Theater in Stratford, Connecticut.

MICHAEL KAHN

MICHAEL KAHN: My name is Michael Kahn, ex-gifted child.

GOLDMAN: Do you remember way back when?

KAHN: Oh, I remember absolutely everything actually. I was one of those people who wanted to be a director at the age of five. I directed my first play at the age of five. It was pretty good actually. I got pretty dreadful at about the age of eleven to sixteen when I seemed to worry about being on a plateau.

But, actually, I have always wanted to do what I am doing. And I feel very grateful that I'm able to do it now, and that I've turned out to be something that I could do.

GOLDMAN: What exposure had you had to the theater by age five that made you make that choice?

KAHN: Very little, because I didn't come from a theatrical family. My family treated going to the theater as a celebration. And at any kind of an event, like a birthday or an anniversary, we went to the theater -- I suppose by the age of five I only saw the ice shows and children's theater. But it was an experience that obviously meant the most to me, and the first thing that I did was a sort of invitation of the ice show.

I must say that it provided me with a great deal to do, and at the same time, it is a kind of problem, because I once said jokingly, that when you're five years old and you want to be a director, you don't have any friends. You just have a supporting cast. I'm always surprised that I didn't want to be an actor, that I wanted to be a director. I don't know that it was because I was bossy, that I wanted to be in control in some kind of way, but I never thought of any other kind of career. I'm not sure that at five I thought in terms of career.

But I was obsessed with the theater. I collected, I read -- I learned to read at a very early age, before I went to school. And my mother had some plays in the house, and I read plays in the same time that other people read books. I read plays. And when I was old enough to go to the library and things, that's what I read, constantly. And then, of course, as soon as I could go, I went to the theater all the time.

And that's about what I did. I mean, when other people played or had clubs and things, I was obsessed with the theater. I had the usual things like a puppet theater and I had a local theater of my friends who I corraled into appearing in their back yards, and a series of plays that I think I wrote.

But it provided me with a sort of education too, because when you read plays, you read perhaps things that other students aren't reading.

GOLDMAN: Did you ever feel anything but passion to do it? Did you ever feel it as an obligation to a particular talent and skill that you had?

KAHN: No, I didn't. And, as a matter of fact, I really did go through a period when I was about 13 or 14, when I was going to the High School of Performing Arts, that I was really worried. I had this obsession and what if at the same time, I wasn't any good? And, of course, when I was in high school and I went to Performing Arts, I was very lucky that there was such a thing as a School of Performing Arts in New York City, where not only could I be with other people who shared the same interests so you didn't feel so set apart anymore, which you did in other situations, but also where I was able to get some training that wasn't all just a game. It wasn't all just -- it never was caprice, but where finally you realize that there was a technique and there was a craft to learn.

And I was lucky to learn so early that there was a craft. And when I knew it was a craft is when I began to get worried, because it became serious work. And then, whenever you learn something, you, of course, always take some steps backward. You know, the more you learn about something, the more you realize how little you know. And that's discouraging, and that certainly happened to me for quite a few years. And you're continually finding new challenges, or you make them for yourself. So, you constantly have that sense that the more you do the less you know, and the more there is to learn.

GOLDMAN: As a child, did you feel on the outside of things? Or was your world so full that it didn't matter?

KAHN: Well, not being maudlin about it, I felt very much on the outside actually, and I think that's one of the things that really has to be taken into consideration with whatever is called gifted child now -- that they must not be made in a way to feel too separate and special. I think they have to be given the opportunity to pursue their gift. At the same time, it's delicate to not make them feel too special.

I think feeling too special at a young age is not a very good thing. It can do all kinds of things to you. It can make you just lonely and depressed. It can also make you grand. And neither of those things are particularly good to go through when you have the problem of being an adolescent anyway. And I think I went through both of those, and I would hope that young people could be somewhat guided better, perhaps, and so that they could maintain a kind of life with their peers and at the same time not be stopped from expressing or pursuing what they are deeply involved in. And how you do that, I think, is an issue.

GOLDMAN: Is there any situation or any person along the way in your childhood that made a difference?

KAHN: Yes, eventually when I got to high school -- not until I got to high school, really. My mother was quite supportive of what I did and sort of classically my father was not, because he was worried that I wouldn't make any money. Most parents simply want their children to make some money.

But when I got to high school, finally, I had an acting teacher who in a sense understood or saw some promise in me. And also he

had a family, and somehow I became part of that family. And I was allowed to flourish and at the same time it wasn't so special there, because he was involved in the theater and his wife was involved in the theater, and so I wasn't so different. And it became much more natural to me there, and I think I learned a lot and grew a great deal in a less rarefied atmosphere, coming into contact with somebody who was also part of that profession.

GOLDMAN: Michael, was there any time in your childhood where you wanted to pretend that you weren't gifted and special and that you wanted to be like everybody else?

KAHN: Well, I don't know if I felt that. I do know that I was miserable a great deal of the time. I think it's because I didn't have any friends. And it really wasn't until I went to high school where I went to a high school where the other people had the same kind of interest that I ever got any friends. I think I went through all of my childhood with really practically no friends.

And I'm not sure whether I said I wanted to be different. I don't think so. I think I really liked the theater too much to feel I wanted to change. But I was aware of a lack in my relationships with people, because I was quite lonely. And I was also an only child which compounds the problem.

And I think a lot of children who at an early age dedicate themselves to something probably find themselves lonely, unless they can find themselves a situation where what they want is not so surprising.

And very often you see that the home -- mine wasn't quite so terrible, but I know other people who are now in the theater, or I now even see children at schools that I teach at where the home situation is very difficult for them, because they're either made fun of, or they're deeply discouraged.

And sometimes that even happens in the school -- you know, your playmates will usually think that what you're doing is foolish and silly and strange, and probably tell you quite often. And if you're also told that at home by your parents and sometimes by your teachers, you have a really difficult problem, and I think you worry about it. I never wanted to stop, but I certainly felt I would like to not do it all by myself.

BLAIR: Michael Kahn, Director of the American Shakespeare Theater in Stratford, Connecticut.

(MUSIC -- JONI MITCHELL SONG ABOUT CHILD PRODIGY)

BLAIR: Joni Mitchell's song about the child prodigy perpetuates the stereotype of the gifted, namely, that they are a little weird. That's not true, but gifted children are different in some ways, very normal in others. This is an issue we'll be coming back to later in this five part series. It may be that our schools make children feel that there's something wrong with being gifted. That's the view of Dr. Rudy Pohl, Editor of Gifted and Talented Education, a Connecticut journal.

DR. RUDY POHL: The most important thing would be to give them opportunities to develop their wide-ranging interest, to encourage them in developing their talents, to accept the idea that a mistake is just friendly invitation to try again, and to pursue their interest beyond the point where the initial frustrations occur.

MERROW: When I asked you that before we started this tape, you gave me what I guess is a shorthand answer -- you said, leave them alone.

POHL: Exactly, if you talk to some of the interesting people around the country, many of them are saying that at a very early age they had developed their talent because some individual teachers allowed them to take time.

For instance, Michael Kahn, who is Director of the Shakespeare Theater in Stratford, Connecticut, at kindergarten age was directing other youngsters in play activities. He's still doing it. Only now he's being paid.

MERROW: He just got in a rut.

POHL: Not exactly, but it's interesting that a professional is paid to do what he did earlier for free.

Robert Anderson started writing at an early age and just didn't allow himself to become frustrated and turned off by people who said you can't do it, it won't work, the publishers won't accept it. He simply pursued his ideas, and as an adult again, as a famous individual throughout the country.

MERROW: I talked with Dr. Bruno Bettleheim on this very issue, and he said you don't need special programs for gifted. You need to remove the obstacles. You need to show them where the library is.

POHL: The advantage of special programs, though, is to gather together youngsters of likability, just so they realize it's okay to be gifted. It's all right to be talented in a unique way, but they're not the only one in the world. They're not the only unique kind of individual who thinks the way they do.

MERROW: Do you think schools as their structured now teach children that it's not okay to be different?

POHL: They sure do, and many of our gifted youngsters learn very easily that the ideal thing to do is to become like the average youngster, so that you won't be hassled.

MERROW: What do kids do, Dr. Pohl, to keep from being hassled because they're gifted?

POHL: Well, they learn very quickly that they read exactly what teacher wants them to read. In school they're reading Dick and Jane -- Look, look, look. At home, one youngster was reading about the Peloponnesian wars and reenacting the battles by using little buttons and paper objects as boats. At school, he couldn't dare read at that level.

MERROW: Teachers can't do that maliciously, though. Why does it happen that way?

POHL: It's not malicious on the part of the teachers. In fact, many of the teachers really believe in youngsters, but the system that requires everybody use the same textbooks at the same time so that any child can transfer within a district, supposedly -- really, it's the system that needs to be changed, not the teachers so much.

MERROW: Now, the research seems to show that teachers, in fact, are not very good identifiers of gifted children. Is that because the system makes them preoccupied with taking attendance and having things in rows and making sure kids are all on the same page?

POHL: Yes, exactly. In other words, when you have youngsters who can very easily imitate average youngsters, if the value you place on being average is great, you won't find the gifted, because they're hidden. If, on the other hand, you cherish the great potential in every child, if you allow for diversity of talent, then the gifted youngster begins to stand out.

MERROW: The school system only reflects the larger society, and maybe it's the larger society that wants the mass of people to be easily regulated. Maybe we simply don't want a system that encourages all that diversity.

POHL: If we look to the historical past, the industrial revolution needed people who fit into neat little niches in society. But as we look to the future, as E. Paul Torrance and others are now exploring with gifted youngsters throughout the country, the future demands that we be diversified, that we have individualistic aspects of ourselves that we will pursue to come up with those unique solutions.

If you look at the inventiveness of Americans, it's a phenomenal growth in the United States. You can see it at the Smithsonian, you can see it at the Chicago Science and Industry Museum. That's not being an average person. That's being unusual, like Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell, like these other people, who came across with ideas.

MERROW: Thanks very much. Dr. Rudy Pohl, who is the Editor of Gifted and Talented Education, Connecticut.

(MUSIC)

CHILDREN FROM SPECIAL CLASSROOM FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED

CHILD: Sometimes I'm faster than other people because that's what I like to do best - playing sports - so I can run and stuff and get exercise.

I'm different from other people because I study stars and everything - but I don't know that much about 'em. I'm just learning.

CHILD: Well, sometimes, I'm good at some things, and other times I'm not. But sometimes I'm a pretty nice kid, and sometimes I'm pretty mean and weird, and goof around, silly sort of.

CHILD: I always draw trucks and talk about 'em. If I hear a truck, or a fire truck or a police car, or something, I run to a window because I love to see 'em. And I like to do math and all that.

CHILD: I'm a nice girl, I think. I'm small, active, and usually called professor by my fellow classmates, because I wear glasses, and I have been known in earlier classes to be intelligent.

(MUSIC)

BLAIR: Reports for this program were provided by Mark Poindexter of Station KCUR, Kansas City; David Freudberg, WGBH, Boston; and Miriam Goodman in San Francisco.

MERROW: This special five part series on gifted and talented children is made possible by a grant from the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation. Their grant also allows us to distribute transcripts free of charge. If you want a set of the five transcripts, write us at National Public Radio -- dash -- Education, Washington, D.C. 20036. We'll be mailing out the complete set when the series is over, so please be patient.

BLAIR: The address again: National Public Radio -- dash -- Education, Wasnington, D.C. 20036. A set of the five cassettes costs $16.00

SCENE FROM WIZARD OF OZ

DOROTHY: Now which way do we go?

SCARECROW: Pardon me, that way is a very nice way.

DOROTHY: Who said that? (DOG BARKS) That's funny, wasn't he pointing the other way?

SCARECROW: Of course, people do go both ways.

DOROTHY: Are you doing that on purpose, or can't you make up your mind?

SCARECROW: That's the trouble I can't make up my mind. I haven't got a brain, only straw. Oh, I'm a failure, because I haven't got a brain.

DOROTHY: Well, what would you do with a brain if you had one?

SCARECROW: Why, if I had a brain I could -- (GOES INTO SINGING --

I WOULD WILE AWAY THE HOURS . . . .)

BLAIR: Well, we know the scarecrow in the Wizard of Oz is not as empty headed as he thinks. It's just that his talents haven't been identified yet. Next week we'll take a look at some different ways of identifying the gifted. And we'll even have a little test for you.

(MUSIC)

CHILD: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a co-production of the Institute for Educational Leadership at the George Washington University and National Public Radio.

BLAIR: Principal support for the program is provided by the National Institute of Education.

MERROW: Additional funds to NPR are provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and to IEL by the Carnegie Corporation, the U.S. Office of Education, and the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation.

BLAIR: This program is produced by Midge Hart. The Executive Producer is John Merrow. Associate Producer Jo Ellen Rackleff For OPTIONS IN EDUCATION I'm Wendy Blair.

(MUSIC)

CHILD: This is NPR -- National Public Radio.